

Area

Al Quoz (38)
 Barsha (7)
 Bur Dubai (15)
 Deira (6)
 DIFC (11)
 Downtown Dubai (2)
 Dubai Marina (4)
 Dubai Media City (2)
 Emirates Hills (1)
 Festival City (2)
 Jumeirah (12)
 Jumeirah Lakes
 Towers (2)
 Karama (1)
 Knowledge Village (1)
 Nad Al Sheeba (3)
 Others (14)
 Oud Metha (1)
 Rashidiya (2)
 Satwa (2)
 Sheikh Zayed Road (5)
 Umm Suqeim (3)

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Human fragments

Works from Lebanese artist, Shawki Youssef's latest exhibition Discuss this article



Picture 1 of 2

Jenny Hewett takes a look at works from Lebanese artist Shawki Youssef's latest exhibition, 'Acid Fields', a confronting series of figurative pieces depicting the fragility of human beings and stages of trauma.

Having come into the world during the Lebanese civil conflict of the '70s and the influence in Syria that consequently followed, it's no surprise that Shawki Youssef's works depict the visual stages of trauma. 'My work is based on the proposition that trauma is here, visible or not,' says the 39-year-old artist. He describes the subsequent influences on his work as both 'physical and mental', and uses words such as 'hollow flesh and fluid being' to illustrate the idea behind his latest exhibition, 'Acid Fields', an expression of the way bodies are represented in contemporary art. 'The concept of the show is the trace that the body leaves, an emotional statement depicting the fragility and sometimes beauty of being,' Youssef explains.

Here, he talks us through the details in, and ideas behind, three of his paintings. 'The entire show begins with a wide view of a canvas which is a complete map. The other works depict closer shots, and eventually it goes into slaughtered details found on a city sidewalk, for example. Despite this visceral imagery, the presence of the sea in his works also suggest possibility, 'the opposite of decay'.

The Arab World Map

'This large canvas depicts an unstable map. I almost visualise a little child pointing at the canvas and yelling "beast". The work exudes a certain sense of unease and discomfort.'

On Humdrum Killing

'This work is a drawing and depicts a dark space lit with dynamism. It is a variation on the same subjects addressed in the show. It could be an acid field or the idea of a geography reshaped. You can see the violence embodied within.'

It is a land brimful with the eyelashes of its dead

'In my work, human presence is necessary. Videos, performances or paintings speak the same language, and I try to depict the body as a space of thought. My work depicts the Arab body that lives under pressure and is on the brink of setting itself on fire. The title of this painting translates to "This is a land brimful with the eyelashes of its dead". It relates to an old Arabic poem which is about lamenting the remains of the departed.'

The Lowdown

Exhibition: 'Acid Fields' until June 23 at Green Art Gallery, Alserkal Avenue, Al Quoz 1 (04 346 9305).

Artist: Shawki Youssef.

Price range of works: Dhs5,000 to Dhs40,000.

By Jenny Hewett

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